

The Impact of Hospital Consolidation on COVID-19 Preparedness in New York

Statewide Senior Action Council

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CVHSA Community Voices
for Health System Accountability

The 2020 Reality: NY hospitals straining to cope with COVID-19

Inside a Brooklyn hospital that is overwhelmed with Covid-19 patients and deaths

New York City's hospitals are filling with coronavirus patients as the pandemic hits the city.

On shift in a New York hospital overwhelmed by coronavirus patients



How is New York handling the hospital bed shortage?

Coronavirus: Gay-rights activist arrested protesting at New York field hospital run by controversial Christian group



Three dozen NYC COVID-19 patients now receiving care in Capital Region hospitals

- Cuomo asks all hospitals to increase capacity by 50%.
- A controversial Christian group has built a tent hospital in Central Park, behind Mount Sinai.
- The Javits Center is a hospital.
- NYC patients sent to Albany Medical Center, St. Peter's Hospital, Ellis Hospital, Saratoga Hospital, St. Mary's in Amsterdam.



How did we end up here?

Three main causes:

1. Officials caught by surprise at the swift and deadly spread of COVID-19
2. Uneven geographic distribution of COVID-19 cases (NYC and suburbs vs. the rest of NY)
- 3. Hospital bed capacity inadequate because of years of downsizing.**



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Hospital Consolidation in New York State



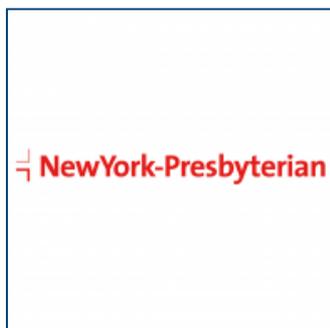
41 acute care hospitals
have closed
over the last 20 years.



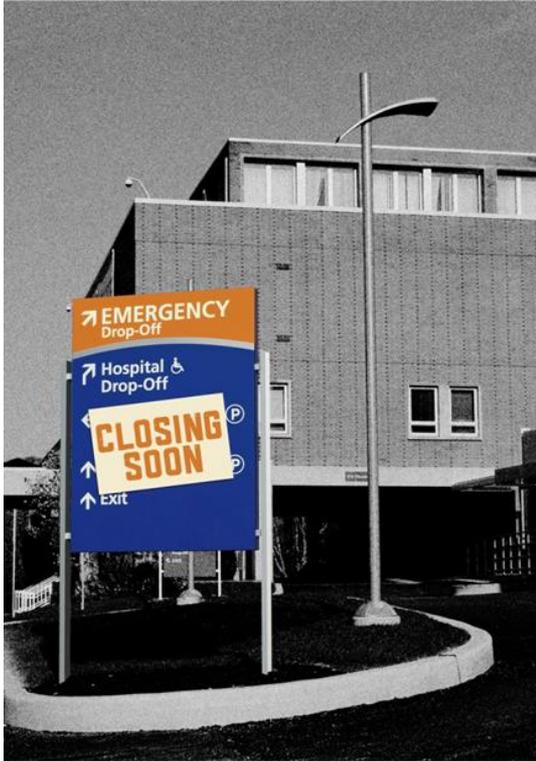
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Many remaining hospitals have joined large regional health systems

- **12 large systems now control more than half the acute care hospitals** and 70% of the beds in the state
- **Four mega-systems** have acquired multiple hospitals, physician practices and outpatient centers.



Impact on patients of hospital consolidation pre-COVID-19



- Patients may have to **travel farther** to receive care if local hospitals are closed or downsized.
- Patients may be treated by **unfamiliar providers**.
- When hospitals merge and reduce or eliminate competition in a local health care “market,” **health care prices could increase**.



Communities have been protesting, but are struggling to have an impact

- Consumers protested Beth Israel's closure of maternity care, cardiac surgery and plan for smaller replacement hospital.
- Eastern Niagara County residents protested closure of maternity services at one hospital and now closure of the remaining hospital.
- Cornwall residents protested loss of their local emergency department.



Hospital downsizing, closing continued as COVID-19 arrived

- On Feb. 6, a state panel approved the closing of 700-bed Mount Sinai Beth Israel and its replacement with a 70-bed facility.
- Consumer advocates warned that the downsizing was “too drastic” and expressed worries about “the spread of the 2019 novel Coronavirus.”

Health care advocates demand answers about Mount Sinai Beth Israel relocation plan



Montefiore has proposed closing its Mount Vernon Hospital

- Montefiore, which acquired Mount Vernon Hospital in 2013, has asked the state for permission to close it.
- Montefiore would replace the hospital with a free-standing ER and outpatient center, using \$40 million in state health facility transformation grant funds.



What are we learning from the COVID-19 crisis?

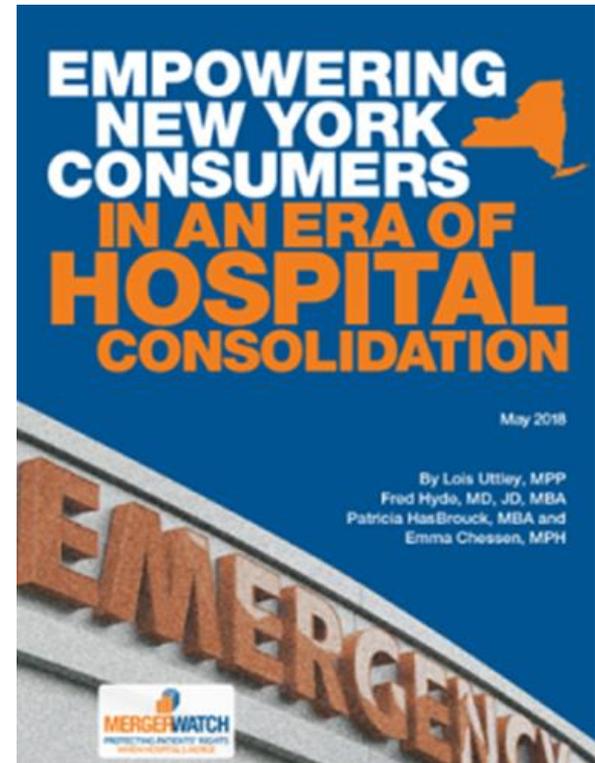
- We need to **pause hospital downsizing** and reconsider community needs, especially when pandemics strike.
- We need to **give consumers and communities a greater voice** when hospitals are proposing consolidation.
- We need to **restore regional health planning**.

Coronavirus: Outbreak shows Mount Vernon hospital closing should be called off, officials say



How can we give consumers a greater voice?

- State oversight of consolidation through the Certificate of Need (CON) process **lacks transparency and consumer engagement.**
- Consumers have **little or no notice or say** when their local hospitals are downsizing, closing or joining large systems.



Barriers to consumer engagement in CON review: A few examples

- There is only one “consumer” seat on the 24-member state CON review body – the Public Health and Health Planning Council (PHHPC).
- PHHPC committee meetings, when public comment is allowed, are held on weekdays in NYC or Albany, with one week’s notice of what’s on the agenda.
- There no recommendations from local officials about CONs affecting their communities.
- There is no requirement for a public hearing before a hospital closes or eliminates its ER or maternity care.



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Changing the system to give consumers a greater voice

- **Increase the number of consumer representatives** on the PHHPC. **A9530/S7304** would add two consumer seats. It awaits the Governor's signature.
- **Engage the public if** a hospital plans to close entirely or eliminate the ER or maternity care. **A2986-A/S5144A** would require 90 days advance notice, a public hearing and a closure plan that addresses consumer concerns.
- **A1148/S1856** would **require every hospital to have a consumer advisory board**, and involve that board in review of proposed consolidation.



Restore local health planning



- Rochester/Finger Lakes has **Common Ground Health**.
- NYC Council Hospitals Committee Chair Carlina Rivera has proposed creating a **NYC Office of Patient Advocate**. It would receive and track consumer complaints, and use that information to comment on CONs from NYC providers.



Create a statewide consumer voice



Coalition calls to halt downsizing at Beth Israel, Mount Vernon hospitals

As New York works to drastically increase its hospital capacity, community groups and the state's largest nurses union are calling for the governor to halt projects that would reduce beds at Mount Sinai Beth Israel in Manhattan and Montefiore Mount Vernon in Westchester County.





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- Statewide Senior Action Council
- Children's Defense Fund-NY
- NY Immigration Coalition
- Empire Justice Center
- March of Dimes NY
- Community Catalyst
- Metro NY Health Care for All
- Community Service Society-NY
- Center for Independence of the Disabled-NY
- Commission on the Public's Health System
- Neighbors to Save Rivington House

